THE
Stedfaſtneſs of PROMISES,
AND THE
Sinfulneſs of STAGGERING:

Opened in a

SERMON

Preached at

Margaret's in *Weſtminſter*,

Before the

PARLIAMENT,

February 28th, 1649.

Being a Day ſet apart for ſolemn Humiliation throughout the Nation.

By JOHN OWEN, *Miniſter of the Goſpel.*

LONDON,
Printed for JOSEPH MARSHALL at the *Bible* in *Newgate-ſtreet*. 1720.

Die Veneris 1 *Martij*, 1649.

ORdered by the PARLIAMENT, *That the Thanks of this Houſe be given to Mr.* Owen, *for his great Pains taken in his* SERMON *preached yeſterday before the* PARLIAMENT *at* Margaret's Weſtminſter, (*being a Day ſet apart for Publick Humiliation:*) *And that he be deſired to Print his* SERMON: *And that he have the like Privilege in Printing, as others in like Caſes have uſually had.*

Ordered, That Sir William Maſham *do give the Thanks of this Houſe to Mr.* OWEN *accordingly.*

Hen. Scobel, *Cler. Parl.*

TO THE

Commons of *England*

In Parliament Aſſembled.

SIRS,

THAT God in whoſe Hand your Breath is, and whoſe are all your Ways, *having cauſed various* Seaſons to paſs over you, *and in them all manifeſted, That* his Works are Truth, and his Ways Judgment, *calls earneſtly by them, for that Walking before him, which is required from them who, with other diſtinguiſhing Mercies, are intereſted in the ſpeciality of his protecting Providence: As in a view of preſent Enjoyments,* to ſacrifice to your Net, and burn Incenſe to your Drag, as tho' by them your Portion were Fat and Plenteous, *is an exceeding provocation to the Eyes of his Glory; ſo to preſs to the reſidue of your Deſires and Expectations by an* Arm of Fleſh, *the Deſignings and Contrivances of Carnal Reaſon, with outwardly appearing* Mediums *of their Accompliſhment, is no leſs an Abomination to him.*

Tho'

Tho' there may be a preſent ſweetneſs to them that find the life of the Hand, *yet their latter End will be, to lie down in Sorrow. That you might be prevailed on* to give Glory to God by ſtedfaſtneſs in Believing, *committing all your Ways to him with* Patience in Well-doing, *to the the Contempt of the moſt varniſhed Appearance of Carnal Policy, was my peculiar Aim in this enſuing* Sermon.

That which added ready Willingneſs to my Obedience unto your Commands, for the Preaching and Publiſhing hereof, being a ſerious Propoſal *for the Advancement and Propagation of the Goſpel in another Nation, is here again recommended to your Thoughts, by*

Your moſt humble Servant

March 8th, 1649.

in our Common Maſter,

J. O.

The *Stedfaſtneſs* of PROMISES, AND The *Sinfulneſs* of STAGGERING: Opened in a SERMON

Preach'd at *Margaret*'s in *Weſtminſter*, &c.

ROM. iv. 20.

He ſtaggered not at the Promiſe of God through Unbelief.

IN the firſt Chapters of this Epiſtle, the Apoſtle from Scripture, and the conſtant Practice of all ſorts of Men of all Ages, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, *Wiſe* and *Barbarians*, proves all the World, and every Individual therein, to have *ſinned, and come ſhort of the glory of God:* And not only ſo, but that it was utterly impoſſible, that by their own ſtrength, or by virtue of any Aſſiſtance communicated,

munication, or Privileges enjoyed, they ſhould ever attain to a *righteouſneſs of their own*, that might be acceptable to God.

Hereupon he concludes that Diſcourſe with theſe two poſitive Aſſertions:

1. That for what is paſt, *every mouth muſt be ſtopped, and all the world become guilty before God*, chap. 3. ver. 19.

2. For the *future*, though they ſhould labour to amend their Ways, and improve their Aſſiſtances and Privileges to a better Advantage than formerly, *yet by the deeds of the law, ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in the ſight of God*, Ver. 20.

Now it being the main drift of the Apoſtle, in this Epiſtle, and in his whole Employment, to manifeſt that God hath not ſhut up all the Sons of Men hopeleſs and remedileſs under this Condition, he immediately diſcovers and opens the rich Supply, which God in Free-grace hath made and provided, for the delivery of his Own from this calamitous Eſtate, even by the *righteouſneſs of Faith in Chriſt*, which he unfoldeth, aſſerteth, proves, and vindicates from Objections, to the *end of the third Chapter*.

This being a Matter of ſo great Weight, as compriſing in itſelf the ſum of the Goſpel wherewith he was entruſted; the honour and exaltation of Chriſt, which above all he deſired; the great Deſign of God to be glorious in his Saints; and in a Word, the chief Subject of the *Ambaſſage* from Chriſt, to him committed, (to wit, that they who neither have, nor by any means can attain a *Righteouſneſs of their own*, by the utmoſt of their workings, may yet have that which is compleat and unrefuſable in Chriſt, by believing) he therefore ſtrongly confirms it in the *fourth Chapter*, by Teſtimony and Example of the Scripture, with the Saints that were of old: Thereby alſo declaring,

claring, That though the manifeſtation of this Myſtery, were now more fully opened by Chriſt *from the boſom of the Father*; yet indeed this was the only way for any to appear in the Preſence of God, ever ſince Sin entred into the World.

To make his Demonſtrations the more evident, he ſingleth out *one* for an Example, who was eminently known, and confeſſed by all to have been the *friend of God*, to have been *righteous* and *juſtified* before him, and thereon to have held ſweet Communion with him all his days; to wit, *Abraham*, the *father according to the fleſh*, of all thoſe who put in the ſtrongeſt of all Men for a ſhare in Righteouſneſs, by the Privileges they did enjoy, and the Works they did perform.

Now concerning him, the Apoſtle proves abundantly in the beginning of the *fourth Chapter*, That the Juſtification which he found, and the Righteouſneſs he attained, was purely that, and no other, which he before deſcribed; to wit, a Righteouſneſs in the *forgiveneſs of Sins, through faith in the blood of Chriſt.*

Yea, and that all the Privileges and Exaltations of this *Abraham*, which made him ſo ſignal and eminent among the Saints of God, as to be called the *Father of the faithful*, were meerly from hence, That this Righteouſneſs of Grace was freely diſcovered and fully eſtabliſhed unto him; an Enjoyment being granted him in a peculiar manner by Faith, of that Promiſe wherein the Lord Chriſt, with the whole ſpring of the Righteouſneſs mentioned, was enwrapped.

This the Apoſtle purſues with ſundry and various Inferences and Concluſions, to the *end of Verſe* 17. *Chap.* 4.

Having laid down this, in the next Place he gives us a Deſcription of that Faith of *Abraham*, whereby he became Inheritor of thoſe excellent things, from the

the *Adjuncts* of it. That as his *Juſtification* was propoſed as an Example of God's dealing with us by his Grace, ſo his *Faith* might be laid down as a Pattern for us in the receiving that Grace.

Now this he doth from
1. *The Foundation of it, whereon it reſted.*
2. *The Matter of it, what he believed.*
3. *The Manner of it, or how he believed.*

1. *From the Bottom and Foundation on which it reſted*, viz. The Omnipotency or All-ſufficiency of God, whereby he was able to fulfil whatever he had engaged himſelf unto by Promiſe, and which he called him to believe, *ver.* 14. *He believed him who quickned the dead, and calleth thoſe things which be not, as though they were.*

Two great Teſtimonies are here of the Power of God: 1. That *he quickneth the dead:* Able he is to raiſe up thoſe that are dead to life again. 2. *He calleth things that are not, as tho' they were:* By his very *Call* or *Word*, gives Being to thoſe things which before were not: As when he ſaid, *Let there be Light, there was Light*, Gen. 1. 3. By that very Word, *commanding light to ſhine out of darkneſs*, 2 Cor. 4. 6.

Theſe Demonſtrations of God's All-ſufficiency, he conſidereth in peculiar reference to what he was to believe; to wit, That *he might be the Father of many Nations*, ver. 11. of the *Jews* according *to the fleſh*; of *Jews* and *Gentiles*, according to the *Faith* whereof we ſpeak.

1. For the firſt, his *Body being now dead*, and *Sarah's womb dead*, ver. 19. he reſts on God *as quickning the dead*, in believing that he *ſhall be the father many Nations.*

2. For

2. For the other, That he ſhould be a Father of the Gentiles by Faith; the Holy Ghoſt witneſſeth that they *were not a people*, Hoſ. 2. 23. The implanting of them in his Stock, muſt be by a Power *that calleth things that are not, as though they were*; giving *a new Nature* and *Being* unto them, which before they had not.

To bottom our ſelves upon the All-ſufficiency of God, for the accompliſhment of ſuch things as are altogether impoſſible to any thing but that All-ſufficiency, is Faith indeed, and worthy our imitation: It is alſo the wiſdom of Faith, to pitch peculiarly on that in God, which is accommodated to the Difficulties wherewith it is to wreſtle: Is *Abraham* to believe, That from *his dead body muſt ſpring a whole Nation?* He reſts on God, as *he that quickneth the dead.*

3. His Faith is commended from the *Matter of it, or what he did believe:* Which is ſaid in general, to be *the Promiſe of God.* Verſe 20. *He ſtaggered not at the promiſe of God through unbelief.* And particularly the Matter of that Promiſe is pointed at, *ver.* 11, 18. that he ſhould be *the father of many nations*; that was, his being a *Father of many Nations*, of having *all nations bleſſed in his ſeed.* A Matter entangled with a world of Difficulties, conſidering the natural Inability of his Body, and the Body of *Sarah*, to be Parents of Children.

When God calls for Believing, his Truth and All-ſufficiency being ingaged, no Difficulty nor ſeeming Impoſſibilities, that the thing to be believed is, or may be attended withal, ought to be of any weight with us; He who hath promiſed, is able.

4. From the *Manner of his believing*, which is expreſſed *Four ways.*

4. *Againſt Hope, He believed in Hope*, ver. 18.

Here is a two-fold *Hope* mentioned, *one* that was *againſt* him, the *other* that was *for* him.

1. He *believed againſt Hope*; that is, when all Arguments which might beget Hope in him, were *againſt* him: *Againſt Hope*, is againſt all motives unto Hope whatever. All Reaſons of natural Hope were *againſt him*: What *Hope* could ariſe in or by Reaſon, that *two dead Bodies* ſhould be the Source and Fountain of *many Nations*? So that againſt all inducements of natural Hope, he believed.

2. *He believed in Hope*; that is, ſuch *Hope* as aroſe, as his Faith *did*, from the conſideration of God's All-ſufficiency: This is an *Adjunct* of his Faith; it was ſuch a Faith as had Hope adjoined with it: And this *believing in Hope*, when all Reaſons of Hope were away, is the firſt thing that is ſet down of the *manner of his Faith*.

In a decay of all Natural Helps, the deadneſs of all Means, an appearance of an utter Impoſſibility that ever the Promiſe ſhould be accompliſhed, then to believe with unfeigned Hope, is a commendable Faith.

2. *He was not weak in Faith*, ver. 29. Μὴ ἀσθενήσας, *not weak*, is the ſecond thing. *Minime debilis*: Beza. He was by *no means weak*. A negation, that by a Figure (μείωσις) doth ſtrongly aſſert the contrary to that which is denied. He was *no way weak*; that is, he was very *ſtrong in Faith*, as is afterwards expreſſed, *ver.* 20. *He was ſtrong in Faith, giving glory to God.*

And the Apoſtle tells you, wherein this his *not weakneſs* did appear: Saith he, *He conſidered not his own Body, being now dead, when he was about an hundred Years old, neither yet the deadneſs of Sarah's Womb*, ver. 19. It was ſeen in this, that his Faith carried him above the conſideration of all Impediments that might lie in the way to the accompliſhment of the Promiſe.

It is meer weakneſs of Faith, that makes a man lie poreing

poreing on the Difficulties and ſeeming Impoſſibilities that lie upon the Promiſe. We think it our Wiſdom and our Strength, to conſider, weigh, and look into the bottom of Oppoſitions and Temptations, that ariſe againſt the Promiſe: Perhaps it may be the ſtrength of our fleſhly carnal Reaſon; but certainly it is the weakneſs of our Faith: He that is *ſtrong in Faith*, will not ſo much as debate or conſider the things that caſt the greateſt ſeeming Improbability, yea, Impoſſibility on the fulfilling of the Promiſe. It will not afford them a Debate or Diſpute of the Cauſe, nor any Conſideration, *being not weak in Faith, he conſidered not.*

3. *He was fully perſwaded*, ver. 21. πληροφορηθεὶς, he was *perſuaſionis plenus, fully perſwaded.* This is the third thing that is obſerved in the *manner of his believing:* He fully, quietly, reſolvedly caſt himſelf on this, That *he who had promiſed, was able to perform it.* As a Ship at Sea, (for ſo the word imports) looking about, and ſeeing Storms and Winds ariſing, ſets up all her Sails, and with all ſpeed makes to the Harbour. *Abraham* ſeeing the ſtorms of Doubts and and Temptations likely to riſe againſt the Promiſe made unto him, with full-ſail breaks through all, to lie down quietly in God's All-ſufficiency. And this is the third.

4. The fourth is, That *he ſtaggered not*, ver. 20. This is that which I have choſen to inſiſt on unto you, as a choice part of the commendation of *Abraham's* Faith, which is propoſed for our imitation.

He ſtaggered not at the promiſe of God through unbelief.

The words may be briefly reſolved into this Doctrinal Propoſition.

All ſtaggering at the Promiſes of God is from unbelief.

What is of any difficulty in the Text, will be cleared in opening the parts of the Obſervation.

Men are apt to pretend ſundry other Reaſons and Cauſes of their ſtaggering. The Promiſes do not belong unto them, God intends not their Souls in them, they are not ſuch and ſuch, and this makes them *ſtagger*; when the Truth is, it is their *unbelief*, and that alone, that puts them into this Staggering condition. As in other things, ſo in this, we are apt to have many fair Pretences for foul Faults. To lay the Burden on the right Shoulders, I ſhall demonſtrate, by God's aſſiſtance, that it is not this, or that, but *unbelief* alone, that makes us ſtagger at the Promiſes.

To make this the more plain, I muſt open theſe two things:

1. *What is the Promiſe here intended.*
2. *What it is to ſtagger at the Promiſe.*

The Promiſe here mentioned, is principally that which *Abraham* believing, it was ſaid eminently, That it *was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs:* So the Apoſtle tells us, *ver.* 5. *of this Chapter:* When this was, you may ſee *Gen* 15. *ver* 6. There it is affirmed, that *he believed the Lord, and it was accounted to him for Righteouſneſs.* That which God had there ſpoken to him of, was about *the multiplying of his ſeed as the ſtars of heaven, whereas he was yet childleſs.*

The *laſt verſe of Chap.* 14. leaves *Abraham* full of earthly Glory. He had newly conquered five Kings, with all their Hoſt; honoured by the King of *Sodom*, and bleſſed by the King of *Salem:* And yet in the *firſt Verſe of Chap.* 15. God *appearing to him in a Viſion*, in the very entrance, bids him FEAR NOT: Plainly intimating, That notwithſtanding all his outward Succeſs and Glory, he had ſtill many Perplexities upon his Spirit, and had need of great Conſolation and Eſtabliſhment: *Abraham* was not clear in the

the accompliſhment of former Promiſes about the *bleſſed Seed*; and ſo, though he have all outward Advancements, yet he cannot reſt in them. Until a Child of God be clear in the main, in the matter of the great Promiſe, the buſineſs of Chriſt, the greateſt outward Succeſſes and Advantages, will be ſo far from quieting and ſettling his Mind, that they rather increaſe his Perplexities: They do but occaſion him to cry, Here is this, and that; here is Victory and Succeſs; here is Wealth and Peace; but here is not Chriſt.

That this was *Abraham*'s Condition, appears from *ver.* 2. *of that Chapter*, where God having told him, That *he was his ſhield, and his exceeding great reward*; He replies, *Lord God, what wilt thou give me, ſeeing I go childleſs?* As if he ſhould have ſaid, Lord God, thou toldeſt me, when I was in *Haran*, now 19 Years ago, That in me and *my ſeed, all the families of the earth ſhould be bleſſed*, Gen. 12. 3. That the bleſſed-bleſſing Seed ſhould be of me; but now I wax old, all Appearances grow up againſt the direct Accompliſhment of that Word, and it was that which above all, in following thee, I aimed at; if I am diſappointed therein, what ſhall I do? And what will all theſe things avail me? What will it benefit me, to have a multitude of earthly Enjoyments, and leave them in the cloſe to my Servant?

I cannot but obſerve, that this ſighing, mournful Complaint of *Abraham*, hath much Infirmity, and ſomething of Diffidence mixed with it: He ſhakes in the very bottom of his Soul, that Improbabilities were growing up, as he thought, to Impoſſibilities againſt him, in the way of the Promiſe: Yet hence alſo mark theſe two things:

1. That he doth not repine in himſelf, and keep up his burning Thoughts in his Breaſt, but ſweetly breaths out the burthen of his Soul, into the boſom of his God: *Lord God*, (ſaith he) *what wilt thou give me, ſeeing I go childleſs? It is of ſincere Faith, to unlade our Unbelief in the Boſom of our God.*

2. That God takes not his Servant at the Advantage of his Complaining and Diffidence; but lets that paſs, until having renewed the Promiſe to him, and ſettled his Faith, then he gives in his Teſtimony, That he believed God. *The Lord overlooks the weakneſs and cauſeleſs wailings of his, takes them at the beſt, and then gives his Witneſs to them.*

This, I ſay, was the Promiſe whereof we ſpake, That he ſhould have *a ſeed of his own, like the ſtars that cannot be numbred*, Gen. 15. ver. 4, 5. And herein are contained three Things:

1. The purely ſpiritual part of it, that concerned his own Soul in Chriſt. God ingaging about his Seed, minds him of his own Intereſt, in the bleſſing-bringing Seed. Jeſus Chriſt, with his whole Mediation, and his whole work of Redemption, is in this Promiſe, with the enjoyment of God in Covenant, *as a Shield, and as an exceeding great Reward.*

2. The Kingdom of Chriſt, in reſpect of the Propagation and Eſtabliſhment of it, with the multitude of his Subjects, that alſo is in this Promiſe.

3. The Temporal part of it, multitudes of Children to a Childleſs Man, and an *Heir from his own Bowels.*

Now this Promiſe in theſe three Branches, takes up your whole Intereſt, compriſes all you are to believe for, be you conſidered either as *Believers*, or as *Rulers.*

1. As *Believers.* So your Intereſt lies in theſe two Things: 1. That your own Souls have a Share and

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Portion in the Lord Chriſt. 2. That the Kingdom of the Lord Jeſus be Exalted and Eſtabliſhed.

2. As *Rulers:* That Peace and Proſperity may be the Inheritance of the Nation, is in your Deſires: Look upon this in ſubordination to the Kingdom of Chriſt; and ſo all theſe are in this Promiſe.

To make this more plain, theſe being the three main Things that you aim at, I ſhall lay before you three Promiſes, ſuited to theſe ſeveral things, which, or the like, you are to View in all your Actings, *all ſtaggering at them being from Unbelief.*

1. The firſt thing you are to believe for, is the Intereſt of your own Souls in the Covenant of Grace by Chriſt: As to this, I ſhall only point unto that Promiſe of the Covenant, *Heb.* 8. 12. *I will be merciful to their unrighteouſneſs, and their ſins and their iniquities I will remember no more.*

2. The ſecond, is the eſtabliſhment of the Kingdom of Chriſt, in deſpite of all Oppoſition; and for this, amongſt innumerable, take that of *Iſa.* 60. 11. *Therefore thy gates ſhall be open continually, they ſhall not be ſhut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the gentiles, and that their kings may be brought; for the nation and kingdom that will not ſerve thee, ſhall periſh.*

3. The Quiet and Peace of the Nation, which ye regard as Rulers, as it ſtands in ſubordination to the Kingdom of Chriſt, comes alſo under the Promiſe; for which, take that of *Jeremiah* 30. 20, 21.

Theſe being your three main Aims, let your Eye be fixed on theſe three, or the like Promiſes; for in the Demonſtration and the Uſe of the Point, I ſhall carry along all three together; deſiring that what is inſtanced in any one, may be always extended to both the other.

2. What it is to *ſtagger at the Promiſe.* He ſtaggered not. οὐ διεκρίθη, he diſputed not; διακρίνομαι, is properly to make uſe of our own Judgment and Reaſon in diſcerning of things, of what ſort they be. It is ſometime rendred *to doubt*, Matt. 21. 21. *If you have faith,* καὶ μὴ διακριθῆτε, *and doubt not*; that is, not uſe Arguings and Reaſonings in your ſelves, concerning the Promiſe, and Things promiſed. Sometimes it ſimply denotes to diſcern a thing as it is: So the word is uſed, 1 *Cor.* 11. 29. διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα, diſcerning the Body.

In the Senſe wherein it is here uſed, as alſo *Matt.* 21. 21. it holds out as I ſaid, *a ſelf-conſultation and diſpute* concerning thoſe contrary things that are propoſed to us. So alſo *Acts* 10. 20. *Peter* is commanded to obey the Viſion, μηδὲν διακρινόμενος, *nothing doubting:* What is that? Why a not continuing to do what he is ſaid to have done, *ver.* 17. *He doubted in himſelf what the Viſion he had ſeen, ſhould mean:* He rolled and diſputed it in his own Thoughts; he *ſtaggered at it.*

To ſtagger then at the Promiſe, is to take into Conſideration the Promiſe itſelf, and withal, all the Difficulties that lie in the way, for the Accompliſhment of it, as to a Man's own particular; and there ſo to diſpute it in his Thoughts, as not fully to caſt it off, nor fully to cloſe with it. For Inſtance; The Soul conſiders the Promiſe of Free-Grace in the Blood of Jeſus, looks upon it, weighs, as well as it is able, the Truth of God, who makes the Promiſe, with thoſe other Conſiderations which might lead the Heart to reſt firmly upon it; but withal, takes into his Thoughts his own Unworthineſs, Sinfulneſs, Unbelief, Hypocriſy, and the like; which, as he ſuppoſes, powerfully ſtave off the the Efficacy of the Promiſe from him. Hence he knows not what to conclude:

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If he had a *grain of Faith*, the Scale turns on the ſide of the Promiſe; the like quantity of *Unbelief*, makes it turn upon him; and what to do he knows not: Let go the Promiſe he cannot; take faſt hold he dares not; but here he *ſtaggers* and wavers to and fro.

Thus the Soul becomes to be like *Paul* in another Caſe, *Phil.* 1. 23. He conſidered his own Advantage on the one ſide by his *diſſolution*, and the Profit of the Churches by his *abiding in the fleſh* on the other; and taking in theſe various Thoughts, he cries out, He is in a *ſtrait*, he *ſtaggered*, he was betwixt two, and knew not which to chuſe: Or as *David*, 2 *Sam.* 24. 14. when he had a tender of ſeveral Corrections made to him, ſays, *I am in a great ſtrait:* He ſees Evil in every, one, and knows not which to chuſe.

A poor Creature looking upon the Promiſe, ſees, as he ſuppoſes, in a ſtedfaſt cloſing with the Promiſe, that there lies Preſumption; on the other hand, certain Deſtruction, if he believes not; and now he *ſtaggers*, he is in a great ſtrait; Arguments ariſe on both ſides, he knows not how to determine them, and ſo hanging in ſuſpenſe, he *ſtaggereth*.

Like a Man travelling a Journey, and meeting with two ſeveral Paths that promiſe both fairly, and he knows not which is his proper way, he gueſſes and gueſſes, and at length cries, Well, I know not which of theſe Ways I ſhould go; but this is certain, if I miſtake I am undone, I'll go in neither but here I'll ſit down, and not move one ſtep in either of them, until ſome one come that can give me direction. The Soul very frequently ſits down in this Heſitation, and refuſes to ſtep one ſtep forwards, till God come mightily and lead out the Spirit to the Promiſe, or the Devil turn it aſide to Unbelief.

It is, as a thing of ſmall weight in the Air; the weight that it hath carries it downwards; and the Air,

Air, with ſome breath of Wind, bears it up again; ſo that it waves to and fro: Sometimes it ſeems as though it would fall, by its own weight, and ſometimes again as though it would mount quite out of Sight, but poized between both, it toſſeth up and down, without any great gaining either way.

The Promiſe, that draws the Soul upward; and the weight of its Unbelief, that ſinks it downward: Sometime the Promiſe attracts ſo powerfully, you would think the Heart quite drawn up into it: And ſometimes again Unbelief preſſes down, that you would think it gone for ever, but neither prevails utterly; the poor Creatures ſwags between both; this it is to *ſtagger*: Like the Diſciples going to *Emaus*, *Luke* 24. *ver.* 14. *they talked together of the things that were hapned*, debated the Buſineſs: And *ver.* 22. they gave up the reſult of their Thoughts; *They truſted it had been he that ſhould have redeemed Iſrael.* They truſted once, but now ſeeing him ſlain and crucified, they know not what to ſay to it: What then? Do they quite give over all truſting in him? No, they cannot do ſo, *ver.* 23, 24, 25. *Certain Women had aſtoniſhed them, and affirmed that he was riſen; yea, and others going alſo to his grave, found it ſo:* Hereupon they *have communication within themſelves, and are ſad*, ver. 17. that is, they *ſtaggered*; they were in a ſtaggering condition; much appears for them, ſomething againſt them, they know not what to do.

A poor Soul that hath been long perplex'd in Trouble and Anxiety of Mind, finds a ſweet Promiſe, Chriſt in a Promiſe ſuited to all his Wants, coming with Mercy to pardon him, with Love to embrace him, with Blood to purge him, and is raiſed up to roll himſelf in ſome meaſure upon this Promiſe; on a ſudden Terrors ariſe, Temptations grow ſtrong, new Corruptions break

break out, Chriſt in the Promiſe dies to him; Chriſt in the Promiſe is ſlain, is in the Grave, as to him: So that he can only ſigh and ſay, I truſted for deliverance by Chriſt, but now all is gone again; I have little or no Hope, Chriſt in the Promiſe is ſlain to me: What then? Shall he give over, never more enquire after this buried Chriſt, but ſit down in Darkneſs and Sorrow? No, he cannot do ſo: This Morning ſome new Arguments of Chriſt's appearance again upon the Soul, are made out; it may be Chriſt is not for ever loſt to him. What does he then? Stedfaſtly believe he cannot; totally give over he will not: He ſtaggers; he is full of Self-communications, and is ſad. This it is to *ſtagger at the Promiſe of God.* I come now to prove, That notwithſtanding any Pretences whatever, *All this ſtaggering is from Unbelief.*

The two Diſciples whom we now mentioned, that *ſtaggered* and diſputed between themſelves in their Journey to *Emaus*, thought they had a goodly Reaſon, and a ſufficient appearing Cauſe of all their Doubtings: *We hoped* (ſay they) *that it was he that ſhould have delivered Iſrael.* What do they now ſtand at? Alas! the *chief Prieſts and Rulers have condemned him to death, and Crucified him*, Luke 24. 20. And is it poſſible that deliverance ſhould ariſe from a Crucified Man? This makes them ſtagger. But when our Saviour himſelf draws nigh to them, and gives them the ground of all this, he tells them it is all from hence, *they are fooliſh and ſlow of heart to believe*, ver. 25. Here is the riſe of all their Doubtings, even their Unbelief. Whilſt you are *ſlow of heart to believe*, do not once think of eſtabliſhment.

Peter venturing upon the Waves at the Command of Chriſt, *Matt.* 14. ſeeing the *Wind to grow boiſtrous*, *ver.* 29. he alſo hath a Storm within, and cries out, *Oh, ſave me.* What was now the Cauſe of *Peter's* Fear

Fear and crying out? Why the Wind and Sea grew boiſtrous, and he was ready to ſink: No ſuch thing, but meerly Unbelief, want of Faith: *Verſe* 31. *O thou of little faith.* (ſaith our Saviour) *wherefore didſt thou doubt?* It was not the great Winds, but thy *little Faith* that made thee *ſtagger.* And in three or four other Places, upon ſeveral Occaſions, doth our Saviour lay all the wavering and ſtaggering of his Followers, as to any ptomiſed Mercy, upon this ſcore, as *Matt.* 6. 30. & 8. 26.

Iſa. 7. *Ahaz* being afraid of the Combination of *Syria* and *Ephraim* againſt him, received a promiſe of deliverance by *Iſaiah*, ver. 7. whereupon the Prophet tells him and all *Judah*, That *if they will not believe, ſurely they ſhall not be eſtabliſhed*, ver. 9. He doth not ſay, If *Damaſcus* and *Ephraim* be not broken, you ſhall not be eſtabliſhed; no, the ſtick is not there. The fear that you will not be eſtabliſhed, ariſeth meerly from your *Unbelief*, that keeps you off from cloſing with the Promiſe, which would certainly bring you eſtabliſhment.

And this is the ſole Reaſon the Apoſtle gives, why the word of Promiſe being preached, becomes unprofitable, even becauſe of Unbelief: *It was not mixed with Faith*, Heb. 4. 2.

But theſe things will be more clear under the Demonſtrations of the Point, which are Two.

1. *Dem.*] When a Man doubts, heſitates, and diſputes any thing in himſelf, his Reaſonings muſt have their riſe either from ſomething within himſelf, or from ſomething in the things concerning which he ſtaggereth: Either *Certitudo mentis*, the aſſurance of his Mind, or *Certitudo entis*, the certainty of the thing itſelf, is wanting.

He

He that doubteth whether his Friend in a far Country be alive, or no, his Staggering ariſeth from the Uncertainty of the Thing it ſelf: when that is made out, he is reſolved; as it was with *Jacob* in the Caſe of *Joſeph*. But he that doubteth, whether the Needle in the Compaſs, being touched with the Loadſtone, will turn Northward; all the Uncertainty is in his own Mind.

When Men *ſtagger at the Promiſes*, this muſt ariſe either from within themſelves, or ſome occaſion muſt be adminiſtred hereunto from the Promiſe. If from within themſelves, that can be nothing but Unbelief; an inbred Obſtacle to cloſing with, and reſting on the Promiſe, that is Unbelief. If then we demonſtrate that there is nothing in the Promiſe, either as to the *matter*, or *manner*, or any *attendency* of it, that ſhould occaſion any ſuch *ſtaggering*, then we lay the burden and blame on the right ſhoulders, *the Sin of Staggering on Unbelief*.

Now that any Occaſion is not adminiſtred, nor Cauſe given, of this Staggering, from the Promiſe, will appear, if we conſider ſeriouſly whence any ſuch Occaſion or Cauſe ſhould ariſe. All the Stability of a Promiſe, depends upon the Qualifications of the Promiſer, to the Ends and Purpoſes of the Promiſe. If a Man make me a Promiſe to do ſuch and ſuch things for me, and I queſtion whether ever it will be ſo, or no; it muſt be from a doubt of the want of one of theſe things in him that makes the Promiſe: either 1ſt, of *Truth*; or 2dly, of *Ability* to make good his Word, becauſe of the difficulty of the thing it ſelf; or 3dly, of *Sincerity*, to intend me really, what he ſpeaks of; or 4thly, of *conſtant Memory*, to take the Opportunity of doing the thing intended; or 5thly, of *Stableneſs*, to be ſtill of the ſame Mind. Now, if there be no want of any of theſe, in him whoſe Promiſes we

ſpeak

ſpeak of, there is then, certainly, no ground of our Staggering, but only from our Own Unbelief.

Let us now ſee whether any of theſe things be wanting to the Promiſe of God: And begin we with the Firſt;

1. Is there *Truth* in theſe Promiſes? If there be the leaſt occaſion in the world to ſuſpect the Truth of the Promiſes, or the Veracity of the Promiſer, then may our *ſtaggering* at them ariſe from thence, and not from our Unbelief. On this ground it is, That all Human Faith, that is bottomed meerly on the Teſtimony of Man, is at beſt but a probable Opinion: For *every man is a lyar*, and poſſibly may lye, in that very thing he is engaged to us in. Tho' a Good Man will not do ſo, to ſave his Life; yet it is poſſible he may be tempted, he may do ſo: But now the Author of the Promiſes whereof we ſpeak, is *Truth it ſelf*, the God of Truth, who hath taken this as his ſpecial Attribute, to diſtinguiſh him from all other. He is the very God of Truth, and holds out this very Attribute in a ſpecial manner, in this very thing, in making of his Promiſe: *He is faithful to forgive us our ſins*, 1 Joh. 1. 9. whence his *Word* is ſaid, not only to be *true*, but *Truth*, Joh. 17. 19. Truth it ſelf: *All fleſh is as graſs, but his Word abideth for ever*, Iſai. 41. 1.

But yet further, that it may be evident that from hence there can be no occaſion of *ſtaggering*; this God *of Truth*, whoſe *Word is Truth*, hath, in his infinite Wiſdom, condeſcended to our Weakneſs, and uſed all poſſible Means to cauſe us to apprehend the Truth of his Promiſes. The Lord might have left us in the dark, to have gathered out his Mind and Will towards us, from obſcure Expreſſions: and knowing of what value his Kindneſs is, it might juſtly be expected that we ſhould do ſo. Men in Miſery, are glad to lay hold of the leaſt word that drops from him that can

can Relieve them, and to take Courage and Advantage upon it: As the Servants of *Benhadad* watched diligently what would fall from the Mouth of *Ahab*, concerning their Maſter, then in fear of death: and when he had occaſionally called him *his Brother*, they preſently laid hold of it, and cry, *Thy Brother Benhadad*; 1 King. 20.33. God might have left us, and yet have manifeſted much Free Grace, to have gathered up falling crumbs, or occaſional droppings of Mercy, and Supply, that we ſhould have rejoyced to have found out one word looking that way: But to ſhut up all Objections, and to ſtop for ever the mouth of Unbelief, he hath not only ſpoken plainly, but hath condeſcended to uſe all the ways of confirming the Truth of what he ſays and ſpeaks, that ever were in uſe among the Sons of Men.

There be Four ways, whereby Men ſeek to obtain credit to what they ſpeak, as an undoubted Truth, that there may be no occaſion of *ſtaggering*.

1. *By often averring and affirming of the ſame thing.* When a Man ſays the ſame thing again and again, it is a ſign that he ſpeaks the Truth, or at leaſt that he would be thought ſo to do. Yea, if an honeſt Man do clearly, fully, plainly, often engage himſelf to us in the ſame thing, we count it a vile jealouſy not to believe the real Truth of his Intentions. Now, the Lord, in his Promiſes, often ſpeaks the ſame things, He ſpeaks *once* and *twice*. There is not any thing that he hath promiſed us, but he hath done it again and again. For Inſtance; As if he ſhould ſay, I will be *merciful to your ſins*, I pray believe me, for, *I will pardon your iniquities*; yea, it ſhall be ſo, *I will blot out your tranſgreſſions as a cloud*. There is not any Want whereunto we are liable, but thus he hath dealt concerning it. As his Command is *line upon line*, ſo is his Promiſe. And this is one way whereby God cauſeth

cauſeth the Truth of his Promiſes to appear. To take away all colour of *ſtaggering*, he *ſpeaks once, yea twice*, if we will hear.

2. *The ſecond way of confirming any* Truth, *is by an* Oath. Though we fear the Truth of ſome Men, in their Aſſertions; yet when once they come to Swear any thing in *Juſtice and Judgment*, there are very few ſo knowingly profligate, and paſt all ſenſe of God, but that their Aſſeverations do gain Credit, and paſs for Truth. Hence the Apoſtle tells us, *Hebr.* 6. 16. *that an Oath for confirmation, is to men an end of all ſtrife.* Though the Truth be before ambiguous and doubtful, yet when any interpoſes with an *Oath*, there is no more Conteſt amongſt Men. That nothing may be wanting to win our Belief to the Promiſes of God, he hath taken this Courſe alſo, he hath ſworn to their Truth, *Hebr.* 6. 13. *When God made Promiſes to* Abraham, *becauſe he could ſwear by no greater, he ſware by Himſelf.* He confirms his Promiſe by an Oath. *O fœlices nos, quorum cauſa Deus jurat! O fœlices, ſi nec juranti Deo credimus!* When Chriſt came, *in whom all the Promiſes of God, are, Yea and Amen*; to make ſure work of the Truth of them, he is confirmed in his Adminiſtrations, by *an Oath*: Hebr. 7. 21. *He was made a Prieſt by an Oath, by him that ſaid, The Lord ſware, and will not repent, Thou art a Prieſt for ever.* Now, I pray, what is the cauſe of this great Condeſcenſion in the God of Heaven, to confirm that Word, which in it ſelf is Truth, by an Oath? The Apoſtle ſatisfies us as to the End aimed at, *Hebr.* 6. 17, 18. This was (ſaith he) the Aim of God herein, That his People ſeeing him engaged, by *two ſuch immutable things, as his Promiſe and his Oath*, may be aſſured, that there is an utter Impoſſibility that any one Word of His ſhould come ſhort of its Truth; or that they firmly reſting upon it, ſhould be deceived thereby. And this is a Second way.

3. An-

3. Another courſe whereby Men confirm the Truth of what they ſpeak, is, *by entring into Covenant, to accompliſh what they have ſpoken.* A Covenant gives ſtrength to the Truth of any Engagement. When a Man hath but told you he will do ſuch and ſuch Things for you, you are full of Doubts and Fears that he may break with you: but when he hath indented in a Covenant, and you can ſhew it under his Hand and Seal, you look upon that, conſider that, and are very ſecure. Even this way alſo hath the Lord taken, to confirm and eſtabliſh his Truths and Promiſes, that all Doubtings and Staggerings may be excluded, he hath wrapped them all up in a Covenant, and brought himſelf into a federal Engagement, that upon every Occaſion, and at every Temptation, we may draw out his Hand and Seal, and ſay to Satan and our own falſe Hearts, See here, behold God engaged in Covenant, to make good *the Word wherein he hath cauſed me to put my Truſt:* And this is his Property, That he is *a God keeping Covenant:* So that having his Promiſe *redoubled*, and that confirmed by an *Oath*, all ſealed and made ſure by an unchangeable *Covenant*, what can we require more, to aſſure us of the Truth of theſe Things? But yet further:

4. In Things of very great Weight and Concernment, ſuch as whereon Lives, and the Peace of Nations do depend, *Men uſe to give Hoſtages, for the ſecuring each other of the Faith and Truth of all their Engagements*, that they may be mutual Pledges of their Truth and Fidelity. Neither hath the Lord left this way unuſed to confirm his Promiſe: He hath given us an Hoſtage to ſecure us of his Truth; one exceedingly dear to hime; one always in his boſom, of whoſe Honour he is as careful as of his Own: Jeſus Chriſt is the great Hoſtage of his Father's Truth; the Pledge

of his Fidelity in his Promiſes: God hath ſet him forth, and given him to us, for this End; *Behold, the Lord himſelf ſhall give you a Sign*, (*a Sign* that he will fulfil his Word) *A Virgin ſhall conceive, and bare a Son, and ſhall call his name Immanuel*, Iſai. 7. 14. That you may be aſſured of my Truth, *the Virgin's Son* ſhall be an Hoſtage of it: *In him are all the Promiſes of God, Yea and Amen.* Thus alſo, to his Saints, he gives the further Hoſtage of his Spirit, and the Firſt-fruits of Glory; that the full Accompliſhment of all his Promiſes may be contracted in a little, and preſented to their view: as the *Iſraelites* had the Pleaſures of *Canaan*, in the *cluſters of Grapes* brought from thence.

Now from all this, it is apparent, not only that there is Truth in all the Promiſes of God, but alſo that Truth ſo confirmed, ſo made out, eſtabliſhed, that not the leaſt Occaſion imaginable is thence adminiſtred to *ſtaggering* or doubting. He that diſputes the Promiſe, and knows not how to cloſe with them, muſt find out another Cauſe of his ſo doing: As to the Truth of the Promiſe, there is no doubt at all, nor place for any.

2. But Secondly, Though there be *Truth* in the Promiſe, yet there may want *Ability* in the Promiſer to accompliſh the thing Promiſed, becauſe of its manifold Difficulties. This may be a Second cauſe of Staggering, if the Thing it ſelf engaged for, be not compaſſable by the Ability of the Engager. As if a skilful Phyſician ſhould promiſe a Sick Man a Recovery from his Diſeaſe; tho' he could rely upon the Truth and Sincerity of his Friend, yet he cannot but queſtion his *Ability* as to this, knowing, that to cure the leaſt Diſtemper, is not abſolutely in his power: But when *He* promiſes, who is *able to perform*, then all doubting in this kind is removed. See then, whether

ther it be ſo, in reſpect of theſe Promiſes whereof we ſpeak. When God comes to *Abraham*, to engage himſelf in that Covenant of Grace, from whence flow all the Promiſes whereof we treat, he lays this down as the bottom of all, *I am* (ſaith He) *God Almighty*, Gen. 17. 1. or, *God All-ſufficient*, very well able to go through with what ever I promiſe. When Difficulties, Temptations, and Troubles ariſe, remember who it is that hath Promiſed; not only He that is True and Faithful, but He that is *God Almighty*, before whom nothing can ſtand, when He will accompliſh his Word. And that this was a bottom of great Confidence to *Abraham*, the *Apoſtle* tells you, *Rom.* 4. 21. *Being fully perſwaded, that he who had promiſed, was able alſo to perform.* When God is engaged by his Word, his *Ability* is eſpecially to be eyed. The Soul is apt to ask how can this be? it is impoſſible it ſhould be ſo to me: but, *He is able that hath promiſed.* And this, *Rom.* 11. 23. the ſame *Apoſtle* holds out to us, to fix our Faith upon, in reference to that great Promiſe of Re-calling the Jews, and Re-implanting them into the Vine, *God* (ſaith he) *is able to graft them in:* Tho' now they ſeem as *dead bones*, yet the Lord knows they may live, *for he is able* to breathe upon them, and make them *terrible as an Army with Banners.* Yea, ſo excellent is this All-ſufficiency, this Ability of God to accompliſh his whole Word, that the Apoſtle cautions us, That we do not bound it, as tho' it could go ſo far only, or ſo far: Nay, ſaith he, *Eph.* 3. 20. *He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think.*

When Men come to cloſe with the Promiſe indeed, to make a Life upon it, they are very ready to queſtion and enquire, whether it be poſſible that ever the Word of it ſhould be made good to them. He that ſees a little Boat ſwimming at Sea, obſerves no

great difficulty in it, looks upon it without any ſolicitouſneſs of Mind at all, beholds how it toſſes up and down, without any fears of its ſinking: But now, let this Man commit his own Life to Sea in that Bottom, what Enquiries will he make? What a ſearch into the Veſſel? Is it poſſible (ſaith he) this little thing ſhould ſafeguard my Life in the Ocean? It is ſo with us in our view of the Promiſes: Whilſt we conſider them at large as they lie in the Word, alas! they are all true, *all Yea and Amen*, ſhall be Accompliſhed: But when we go to venture our Souls upon a Promiſe, in an Ocean of Wrath and Temptations, then every blaſt, we think, will overturn it, it will not bear us above all theſe Waves; Is it poſſible we ſhould ſwim ſafely upon the Plank of a Pinnace in the midſt of the Ocean?

Now here we are apt to deceive our ſelves, and miſtake the whole thing in Queſtion, which is the bottom of many corrupted Reaſonings and perplexed Thoughts. We enquire whether it can be ſo to us as the Word holds out; when the Truth is, the Queſtion is not about the Nature of the Thing, but about the Power of God. Place the Doubt aright, and it is this; Is God *able* to accompliſh what he hath ſpoken? Can he heal my Backſlidings? Can he pardon my Sins? Can he ſave my Soul? Now that there may be no Occaſion nor Colour of Staggering upon this Point, you ſee God reveals himſelf as an *All-ſufficient God*; as one that is able to go through with all his Engagements. If you will *ſtagger*, you may ſo do; this is certain, you have no Cauſe to do ſo from hence; there is not any Promiſe that ever God entred into, but he is able to perform it.

Object.] But you will ſay, Though God be thus *Able*, thus *All-ſufficient*, yet may there not be Defects in the *Means* whereby he worketh? as a Man may have a ſtrong Arm able to ſtrike his Enemies to the Ground,

Ground, but yet if he ſtrike with a Feather, or a Straw, it will not be done; not for want of ſtrength in his Arm, but of fitneſs and ſuitableneſs in the Inſtrument whereby he acteth. But,

Anſw.] 1. God uſing Inſtruments, they do not act according to their own Vertue, but according to the Influence of Vertue by Him to them communicated. Look, to what End ſoever God is pleaſed to uſe any Means, his chuſing of them fills them with Efficacy to that purpoſe. Let the Way and *Means* of Accompliſhing what thou expecteſt by the Promiſe, be in themſelves never ſo weak, yet know, that from God's chuſing of them to that End, they ſhall be filled with Vertue and Efficacy to the Accompliſhment of it.

2. It is expreſly affirmed of the great *Mediums* of the Promiſe, that they alſo are *Able*; that there is no want of Power in them for the Accompliſhment of the Thing promiſed.

1. There is the *Means procuring it*, and that is Jeſus Chriſt: The Promiſes, as to the good Things contained in them, are purchaſed by him: And of him the Apoſtle affirms expreſly, That *he is* ABLE *to ſave to the utmoſt, them that come to God by him*, Heb. 5. 27. No want here, no Defect; He is *able to do it to the utmoſt*, *able to ſave them that are tempted*, Heb. 2. 18.

2. There is the great *Means of Manifeſtation*, and that is the Word of God: And of this alſo it is affirmed, that it is *able*. It hath an All-ſufficiency in its kind. *Paul* tells the Elders of *Epheſus*, That the *Word of Grace is able to build them up, and to give them an Inheritance among them that are ſanctified*, Acts 20. 32.

3. There is the great *Means of Operation*, and that is the Spirit of Grace: He works the Mercy of the

Promiſe upon the Soul: He alſo is *able*, exceeding Powerful to effect the End appointed. It hath no bounds, nor meaſure of Operation, but only its own *Will*; 1 *Cor.* 12. 11.

Hence then it is apparent, in the ſecond Place, That there is no occaſion for Doubting; yea, that all Staggering is excluded, from the conſideration of the Ability of the Promiſer, and the Means whereby he worketh. If thou continueſt to Stagger, thou muſt get a better Plea than this, *It cannot be*, it is impoſſible. I tell thee nay; but God is *able* to accompliſh the whole Word of his Promiſe. But,

2. There may be want of *Sincerity* in Promiſes and Engagements, which whilſt we do but ſuſpect, we cannot chuſe but *ſtagger at them.* If a Man make a Promiſe to me, and I can ſuppoſe that he intends not as he ſays, but hath Reſerves to himſelf of another purpoſe, I muſt needs doubt, as to the Accompliſhment of what he hath ſpoken. If the Soul may ſurmiſe, that the Lord intends not him *ſincerely* in his Promiſes, but reſerves ſome other Thing in his Mind, or that it ſhall be ſo to others, and not to him, he muſt needs diſpute in himſelf, ſtagger, and keep off from Believing. This, then, muſt be demonſtrated in the *Third Place*, That the Promiſes of God, and God in all his Promiſes, are full *of ſincerity*, ſo that none need fear to caſt himſelf on them, they ſhall be real unto him. Now concerning this, Obſerve,

1. That *God's Promiſes are not declarative of his ſecret Purpoſes and Intentions.* When God holds out to any a Promiſe of the Pardon of Sin, this doth not ſignify to any ſingular Man, that it is the Purpoſe of God that his Sin ſhall be pardoned: For if ſo, then either all Men muſt be pardoned to whom the Word of Promiſe comes, which is not; or elſe God fails of his Purpoſes, and comes ſhort of his Intendments; which

which would render him, either Impotent, that he could not, or Mutable, that he would not Eſtabliſh them. But, *who hath reſiſted his will?* Rom. 9. *He is the Lord, and he changeth not*, Mal. 1. So that, though every one to whom the Promiſe is held out, hath not the Fruit of the Promiſe; yet this derogates not at all from the Sincerity of God in his Promiſes; for he doth not hold them forth to any ſuch End and Purpoſe, as to declare his Intentions concerning particular Perſons.

2. *There are ſome abſolute Promiſes comprehenſive of the Covenant of Grace*, which as to all thoſe that belong to that Covenant, do hold out thus much of the Mind of God, That they ſhall certainly be Accompliſhed in, and towards them all. The Soul may freely be invited to venture on theſe Promiſes, with Aſſurance of their Efficacy towards him.

3. This God principally declares in all his Promiſes, of his Mind and Purpoſe, That every Soul, to whom they ſhall come, may freely reſt on; to wit, *That Faith in the Promiſes, and the Accompliſhment of the Promiſes, are inſeparable.* He that believeth, ſhall enjoy: This is moſt certain; this God declares of his Mind, his Heart, towards us; That as for all the good Things he hath ſpoken of to us, it ſhall be to us *according to our Faith.* This, I ſay, the Promiſes of God do ſignifie of his Purpoſe, That *the Believer of them, ſhall be the Enjoyer of them:* In them *the Righteouſneſs of God is revealed from Faith to Faith*, Rom. 1. 17. From the Faith of God Revealing, to the Faith of Man Receiving. So that upon the making out of any Promiſe, you may ſafely conclude, that upon Believing, the Mercy, the Chriſt, the Deliverance of this Promiſe, is mine. It is true, if a Man ſtand diſputing and ſtaggering, whether he have any ſhare in a Promiſe, and cloſe not with it by Faith,

he may come ſhort of it; and yet without the leaſt Impeachment of the Truth of the Promiſe, or Sincerity of the Promiſer; for God hath not ſignified by them, that Men ſhall enjoy the good Things of them, whether they Believe, or not. Thus far the Promiſes of Grace are General, and carry a Truth to all, that there is an inviolable connexion between Believing, and the Enjoyment of the Things in them contained. And in this Truth is the Sincerity of the Promiſer, which can never be queſtioned, without Sin and Folly. And this wholly ſhuts up the Spirit from any occaſion of Staggering; *O ye of litte Faith! wherefore do you doubt?* Ah! leſt our ſhare be not in this Promiſe; leſt we are not intended in it: Poor Creatures! There is but this one way of keeping you off from it, that is, diſputing it in your ſelves, by Unbelief. Here lies the *Sincerity* of God towards thee, That *Believing*, thou ſhalt not come ſhort of what thou aimeſt at. Here then is no room for Staggering. If Proclamation be made, granting Pardon to all ſuch Rebels as ſhall come in by ſuch a Seaſon, do Men uſe to ſtand queſtioning whether the STATE bear them any Good-will, or no? No, ſaith the poor Creature, I will caſt my ſelf upon Their Faith and Truth engaged in their Proclamation; whatever I have deſerved in particular, I know they will be Faithful in Their Promiſes. The Goſpel-Proclamation is of Pardon to all Comers in, to all Believers: It is not for thee, poor Staggerer, to queſtion what is the Intendment towards thee in particular; but roll thy ſelf on this, There is an abſolute Sincerity in the ENGAGEMENT, which thou may'ſt freely reſt upon. But,

4. Tho' all be preſent, *Truth*, *Power*, *Sincerity*; yet if he that makes the Promiſe ſhould *Forget*, this were a ground of Staggering. *Pharaoh*'s Butler, without doubt, made large Promiſes to *Joſeph*, and probably

bably ſpake the Truth according to his preſent Intention: Afterwards ſtanding in the Preſence of *Pharaoh*, reſtored to Favour, he had doubtleſs Power enough to have procured the liberty of a poor innocent Priſoner: but yet this would not do, it did not profit *Joſeph*, becauſe, as the Text ſays, *he did not remember* Joſeph, *but forgat him*, Gen. 39. 23. This forgetting, made all other things uſeleſs. But neither hath *this* the leaſt Colour in Divine Promiſes. It was *Sion*'s Infirmity to ſay, *The Lord hath forſaken me, and my God hath forgotten me*, Iſa. 49. 14. For, ſaith the Lord, *Can a woman forget her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the ſon of her womb? Yea, they may forget, but I will not forget thee: behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, and thy walls are continually before me*, ver. 15, 16.

The Cauſes of Forgetfulneſs, are, 1. *Want of Love*. The things that Men Love not, they care not for: The matters of their Love are continually in their Thoughts. Now ſays God to *Sion*, Why ſay'ſt thou, *I have forgotten thee?* Is it for want of Love? Alas! the Love of a moſt tender Mother to her ſucking Child, comes infinitely ſhort of my Love to thee; My Love to thee is more fixed than ſo, and how ſhouldeſt thou be out of my Mind? How ſhouldeſt thou be forgotten? *Infinite love will have infinite Thoughtfulneſs and Remembrance.*

2. *Multiplicity of Buſineſs*. This, with Men, is a Cauſe of forgetting. I had done, ſays one, as I promiſed, but multiplicity of Occaſions thruſt it out of my Mind, I pray excuſe me: Alas! though I Rule all the World, yet, *thou art graven upon the palms of my hands, and therefore thy walls are continually before me.* See alſo *Pſal.* 77. 9. Neither then is there, as to this, the leaſt colour given us to *ſtagger* at the Promiſe of God.

5. But

5. But Laſtly, Where all other things concur, yet if the Perſon promiſing, be *changeable*, if he may alter his Reſolution, a Man may juſtly doubt and debate in himſelf the Accompliſhment of any Promiſe made to him: It is true, may he ſay, he now ſpeaks his Heart and Mind, but who can ſay he will be of this Mind to Morrow? may he not be turned, and then what becomes of the Golden Mountains that I promiſed my ſelf, upon his Engagement? Wherefore, in the Laſt place, the Lord carefully rejects all ſinful Surmiſes concerning the leaſt Change or Alteration in him or any of his Engagements. *He is the Father of Lights, with whom is no variableneſs, nor ſhadow of turning*, Jam. 1. 18. no ſhadow, no appearance of any ſuch thing. *I am the Lord*, (ſaith he) *I change not; therefore ye ſons of* Jacob *are not conſumed*, Mal. 3. 6. The Lord knows, that if any thing in us might prevail with him to alter the Word that is gone out of his Mouth, we ſhould ſurely periſh. We are poor provoking Creatures, therefore he lays our *not being conſumed*, only on this, even his *own Unchangeableſs*: This we may reſt upon, *he is of one mind, and who can turn him?*

And in theſe Obſervations, have I given you the firſt Demonſtration of the Point: *All ſtaggering is from our own Unbelief.*

2. *Demon.*] The *Experience* which we have of the mighty Workings of God, for the Accompliſhment of all his Promiſes, gives light unto this thing. We have found it true, That where he is once engaged, he will certainly go through unto the appointed Iſſue, though it ſtand him in the laying out of his Power and Wiſdom to the uttermoſt. *Hab.* 3. 9. *Thy Bow was made quite naked, according to the Oaths of the Tribes, thy Word.* If God's Oath be paſſed, and his Word engaged, he will ſurely Accompliſh it, though it coſt him

him the *making of his Bow quite naked*, the manifeſtation of his Power to the utmoſt.

It is true, Never did any wait upon God for the Accompliſhment and Fulfilling of a Promiſe, but he found many Difficulties fall out between the Word and the Thing. So was it with *Abraham* in the buſineſs of a Son, and ſo with *David* in the matter of a Kingdom. God will have his promiſed Mercies to fall as the Dews upon the parched gaſping Earth; or *as the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land*, Iſa. 32. 2. very welcome unto the Traveller, who hath had the Sun beat upon his Head in his Travel all the Day. *Zion is a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, as a royal diadem in the hand of her God*, Iſa 62. 3. The Precious-ſtones of a *Diadem* muſt be cut and poliſhed, before they be ſet in Beauty and Glory. God will have oft-times the *precious living Stones of Zion* to have many a ſharp *cutting*, before they come to be fully fixed in his Diadem: But yet in the cloſe, whatever Obſtacles ſtand in the way, the Promſe hath ſtill wrought out its Paſſage: As a River, all the while it is ſtopped with a Dam, is ſtill working higher and higher, ſtill getting more and more ſtrength, until it bear down all before it, and obtain a free courſe to its appointed Place. Every time Oppoſition lies againſt the fulfilling of the Promiſe, and ſo ſeems to impede it for a ſeaſon, it gets more and more Power, until the appointed Hour be come, and then it bears down all before it.

Were there any thing imaginable whereof we had not Experience, that it hath been conquered to open a Door for the fulfilling of every Word of God, we might poſſibly, as to the Apprehenſion of that thing, *ſtagger* from ſome other Principle than that of *Unbelief*.

What

What is there in Heaven or Earth, but God and his miniſtring Spirits, that hath not, at one time or other, ſtood up to its utmoſt Oppoſition, for the fruſtrating of the Word, wherein ſome or other of the Saints of God have put their Truſt? *Devils*, in their Temptations, Baits, Subtilties, Accuſations, and Oppoſitions: *Men*, in their Counſels, Reaſonings, Contrivances, Intereſts, Dominions, Combinations, Armies, Multitudes, and the utmoſt of their Endeavours: The whole *frame of Nature*, in its primitive inſtituted Courſe, *Fire*, *Water*, *Day*, *Night*, *Age*, *Sickneſs*, *Death*; all, in their Courſes, have fought againſt the Accompliſhment of the Promiſes. And what have they obtained, by all their Contendings? All diſappointed, fruſtrated, turned back, changed, and ſerved only to make the Mercy of the Promiſe more amiable and glorious.

I would willingly illuſtrate this *Demonſtration* with an Inſtance, That the Almighty, All-conquering Power that is in the Promiſe, ſettling all *ſtaggering* upon its own *Baſis* of UNBELIEF, might be the more evident.

I might here mention *Abraham*, with all the Difficulties and appearing Impoſſibilities which the Promiſe unto him did paſs through, and caſt to the Ground, the Mercy of it at length *ariſing out of the grave*; for he *received his Son from the Dead, in a figure*, Hebr. 11. 19. Or I might ſpeak of *Joſeph*, *Moſes*, or *David*: But I ſhall rather chuſe a Preſident from among the Works of God, in the Days wherein we live; and that in a buſineſs, concerning which, we may ſet up our *Eben-Ezer*, and ſay, *Thus far God hath been an Helper*.

Look upon the Affair of *Ireland*: The Engagement of the Great *God of Revenges* againſt Murder and Treachery, the Intereſt of the *Lord Chriſt and his Kingdom*

Kingdom againſt the *Man of Sin*, furniſhed the Undertakers with manifold Promiſes to carry them out to a deſired, a bleſſed Iſſue. Take now a brief view of ſome *Mountains of Oppoſition* that lay in the way againſt any Succeſs in that Place; and hear the Lord ſaying to every one of them, *Who art thou, O great Mountain? Before my People thou ſhalt be made a Plain*; Zech. 4. 7.

Not to mention the Strivings and Struglings of *two manner of People*, in the womb of this Nation, totally obſtructing for a long time the bringing forth of any Deliverance for *Ireland*; nor yet that mighty Mountain (which ſome miſ-named *a Level*) that thought at once to have locked an everlaſting Door upon that Expedition; I ſhall propoſe ſome few (of many) that have attended it.

1. *The Silence that hath been in Heaven for half an hour, as to this Buſineſs:* The great Ceſſation of Prayers in the Heavens, of many Churches, hath been no ſmall Mountain in the Way of the Promiſe. When God will do Good for *Zion*, he requires that his *Remembrancers give him no Reſt, until he do it*, Iſai. 62. 7. and yet ſometimes, in the cloſe of their Supplications, gives them an *Anſwer, by terrible things*, Pſal. 65. 5. He is ſometimes *Silent to the Prayers of his People*, Pſal. 28. 1. Is not then a Grant rare, when his People are ſilent as to Prayers? Of how many Congregations in this Nation, may the Prayers, Tears, and Supplications for the carrying on of the Work of God in IRELAND, be written with the *lines of emptineſs*? What a *Silence hath been in the Heaven* of many Churches, *for this laſt half hour*? How many that began with the Lord in that Work, did never ſacrifice at the Altar of *Jehova niſſi*; nor conſidered that the Lord hath *ſworn to have War with ſuch Amalekites* as are there, *from generation to generation*?

Exod.

Exod. 17. 15, 16. They have forgotten, that *Ireland* was *the firſt of the Nations* that laid wait for the Blood of God's People deſiring to enter into his Reſt; and therfore *their latter end ſhall be, to periſh for ever*, Numb. 24. 20. Many are as angry as *Jonah*, not that *Babylon* is ſpared, but that it is not ſpared. Hath not this been held out as a Mountain? What will you now do, when ſuch or ſuch, theſe and thoſe Men, of this or that Party, look upon you *as the graſs upon the houſe tops, which withereth afore it groweth up; wherewith the mower filleth not his hand, nor he that bindeth ſheaves his boſom*; that will not ſo much as ſay, *The bleſſing of the Lord be upon you, we bleſs you in the name of the Lord?* But now! ſhall the Faithleſneſs of Men, make the *Faith of God of none effect?* Shall the Kingdom of Chriſt ſuffer, becauſe ſome of thoſe that are his, what through Carnal Wiſdom, what through Spiritual Folly, refuſe to come forth *to his help againſt the mighty?* No, doubtleſs! *The Lord ſees it, and it diſpleaſes him; he ſees that there is no man, and wonders that there is no interceſſour:* (even marvels that there are no more Supplications on this behalf) *therefore his own arm brought ſalvation to him, and his own righteouſneſs it ſuſtained him: He put on righteouſneſs as a breaſtplate, and an helmet of ſalvation upon his head: and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak: According to their deeds, accordingly he will repay, fury to his adverſaries, recompence to his enemies, to the iſland he will repay recompence*; Iſai. 59. 15, 16, 17, 18. Some Mens not Praying, ſhall not hinder the Promiſes Accompliſhing. They may ſooner diſcover an Idol in themſelves, than diſappoint the Living God: *This was a Mountain.*

2. Our own Advices and Counſels have often ſtood in the way of the Promiſes *bringing forth:* This is not a Time nor Place for Narrations: So I ſhall only ſay to this in general, That if the choiceſt and moſt rational Advices of the Army had not been overſwayed by the Providence of God, in all probability your Affairs had been more than ten degrees backward, to the Condition wherein they are.

3. The *viſible Oppoſition of the combined Enemy* in that Nation, ſeemed, as to our Strength, unconquerable. The *Wiſeman* tells us, *that a three-fold cord is not eaſily broken: Ireland* had a *five-fold Cord* to make ſtrong Bands for *Zion*, twiſted together: Never (I think) did ſuch different Intereſts *bear with one another*, for the compaſſing of one Common End.

He that met the *Lyon*, the *Fox*, and the *Aſs* traveling together, wonder'd, *quo unâ iter facerent*, whither theſe ill-matcht Aſſociates did bend their Courſe! neither did his Marvelling ceaſe, when he heard they were going a Pilgrimage, in a buſineſs of Devotion.

He that ſhould meet *Proteſtants*, *Covenanted Proteſtants*, that had ſworn, in the Preſence of the Great God, to extirpate *Popery* and *Prelacy*, as the *Scots* in *Ulſter*; Others, that counted themſelves under no leſs ſacred Bond, for the maintenance of *Prelates*, *Service-Book*, and the like, as the whole Party of *Ormond*'s Adherents; joined with a mighty Number that had for Eight Years together ſealed their Vows to the *Romiſh Religion*, with our Blood and their own; adding to them thoſe that were *profound to revolt* up and down, as ſuited their own Intereſt, as ſome in *Munſter*; All cloſing with that Party, which themſelves had laboured to render moſt odious and execrable, as moſt defiled with Innocent Blood: He, I ſay, that ſhould ſee all theſe, after ſeven Years mutual

tual Conflicting, and imbruing their Hands in each other's Blood, to march all one Way together, cannot but marvel, *quo unâ iter facerent*, whither they ſhould journey ſo friendly together. Neither, ſurely, would his Admiration be leſſened, when he ſhould hear, That the firſt thing they intended and agreed upon, was, To cover the Innocent Blood of 41; contrary to that Promiſe, *Behold, the Lord cometh out of his place, to puniſh the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; the earth alſo ſhall diſcloſe her blood, and ſhall no more cover her ſlain*; Iſai. 26. 21. And next of all, To eſtabliſh Catholick Religion, or the *Kingdom of Babel*, in the whole Nation, in oppoſition to the Ingaged Truth, and in our days viſibly manifeſted Power of the Lord Jeſus: with ſundry ſuch-like things, contrary to their Science and Conſcience, their Covenant and Light, yea, the Truſt and Honeſty, of moſt of the chief Leaders of them.

Now, how can the Promiſe ſtand in the Way of this *Hydra*? What ſays it to this Combined Oppoſition? Why, firſt, ſaith the Lord, *Though hand join in hand, the wicked ſhall not be unpuniſhed*, Prov. 11. 21. Their Covering ſhall be too ſhort, and narrow, to hide the Blood which God will have diſcloſed.

And, ſecondly, Though they will *give their Power to the Beaſt*, and *fight againſt the Lamb*, conſenting in *this*, who agree in nothing elſe in the world; yet they ſhall be *broken in pieces: though they Aſſociate themſelves, they ſhall be broken in pieces*: If *Rezin*, and the Son of *Remaliah*, *Syria* and *Ephraim*, *old* Adverſaries, combine together for a *new* Enmity againſt *Judah*: If *Covenant* and *Prelacy*, *Popery* and *Treachery*, Blood and (as to that) *Innocency*, joyn hand in hand, to ſtand in the way of the Promiſe; yet I will not in this joyn with them, ſays the Lord. Though they were preſerved all diſtinctly in their ſeveral

ſeveral Intereſts for ſeven Years, in their mutual Conflicts, that they might be Scourges to one another; yet if they cloſe, to keep off the Engagement of God in the Word of his Promiſe, not much more than the fourth part of one Year ſhall conſume ſome of them to nothing, and fill the reſidue with Indignation and Anguiſh.

By what Means God hath mightily and effectually wrought, by mixing Folly with their Counſels, putting Fear, Terror, and Amazedneſs upon all their Undertakings, to carry on his own Purpoſe, I could eaſily give conſiderable Inſtances. That which hath been ſpoken in General, may ſuffice to bottom us on *this*, That whilſt we are in the way of God, all *ſtaggering* at the Iſſue, is from *Unbelief*; for he can, he will do more ſuch things as theſe.

Uſe 1.] My *Firſt Uſe* ſhall be, as unto Temporals; for they alſo (as I told you) come under the Promiſe, not to be ſtaggered at, with the Limitations beforementioned. Learn hence, then, *to live more by Faith* in all your Actings: *Believe*, and *you ſhall be eſtabliſhed*. I have, in the *days of my pilgrimage*, ſeen *this evil under the ſun*: Many Profeſſors of the Goſpel, called out to Publick Actings, have made it their great Deſign to manage all their Affairs with Wiſdom and Policy, like *the men of the reſidue of the nations*; living by Faith upon the Promiſes, hath appeared to them as too low a thing for the Condition and Employment wherein they now are: Now they muſt Plot, and Contrive, and Deſign, lay down Principles of Carnal Fleſhly Wiſdom, to be purſued to the uttermoſt: And what, I pray, hath been the Iſſue of ſuch Undertakings?

1. Firſt, The Power of Religion hath totally been devoured, by that lean, hungry, never-to-be-ſatisfied Beaſt of Carnal Policy: No ſigns left that it was ever in their boſoms. Conformity unto Chriſt in Goſpel

Graces, is looked on as a mean, contemptible thing: Some of them have fallen to downright Atheiſm, moſt of them to wretched Formality in the Things of God. And then,

2. *Secondly*, Their Plots and Undertakings have generally proved Tympanous and Birthleſs; Vexation and Diſappointment hath been the portion of *the reſidue of their days.* The ceaſing *to lean upon the Lord*, and ſtriving to be wiſe in our Actings, like the Men of the World, hath made more *Rehoboams*, than any one Thing in this Generation.

What now lies at the bottom of all this? *Meerly ſtaggering at the Promiſe, through Unbelief.* What Building is that like to be, which has a *ſtaggering* Foundation? When God anſwers not *Saul*, he goes to the Devil. When the Promiſe will not ſupport us, we go to Carnal Policy: neither can it otherwiſe be. Engaged Men, finding one way diſappoint them, preſently betake themſelves to another. If Men begin once to *ſtagger* at the Promiſe, and to conclude in their fears, That it will not receive Accompliſhment, That the *Fountain* will be dry; they cannot but think it high time to *dig Ciſterns* for themſelves. When *David* ſays, *he ſhall one day periſh by the hand of* Saul, (whatever God had ſaid to the contrary) his next Advice is, *Let me go to the Philiſtines:* And what Succeſs he had in that Undertaking, you know. *Political Diverſions, from pure dependance on the Promiſe, do always draw after them a long train of Entanglements.*

Give me leave to give a Word of Caution againſt one or two Things which Men *ſtaggering* at the Promiſes through Unbelief, do uſually, in their Carnal Wiſdom, run into, for the compaſſing of the Thing aimed at, That they may not be found in your Honourable Aſſembly.

1. *Take*

1. *Take heed of a various management of Religion, of the Things of God, to the advantage of the preſent poſture and condition of your Affairs.* The Things of Chriſt ſhould be as *Joſeph*'s *Sheaf*, to which all others ſhould *bowe*. When they are made to cringe, and bend, and put on a flattering Countenance, to allure any ſort of Men into their Intereſt, they are no more the Things of Chriſt. I would it had not been too evident formerly, That Men entangled in their Affairs, enjoying Authority, have with all Induſtry and Diligence purſued ſuch and ſuch an Appearance of Religion; not that themſelves were ſo paſſionately affected with it, but meerly for the Satisfaction of Some, in that, whoſe Aſſiſtance and Compliance they needed for other things. Oh! let not the Things of God be immixed any more with Carnal Reaſonings. His Truths are all eternal and unchangeable. Give them at once the Sovereignty of your Souls, and have not the leaſt thought of making them bend, to ſerve your own Ends, tho' good and righteous. Think not to get the Promiſe, like *Jacob*, by repreſenting your ſelves in the Things of God for other than you are.

2. *Hide no Truth of God, as to that way of manifeſtation which to you is committed, for fear it ſhould prove prejudicial to your Affairs.* That Influence and Signature of your Power, which is due to any Truth of God, let it not be with-held by Carnal Reaſonings. I might further draw out theſe, and ſuch like things as theſe; the Warning is, To live upon the Faith of that Promiſe, which ſhall ſurely be eſtabliſhed, without turning aſide to needleſs crooked paths of your own.

Uſe 2.] *Secondly*, Be faithful in doing all the work of God whereunto you are engaged, as he is faithful in *working all your works* whereunto he is engaged. Your Work whereunto (whilſt you are in his ways) God is engaged in your Safety and Protection. God's

Work whereunto you are engaged, is the propagating of the Kingdom of Chriſt, and the ſetting up of the *Standard of the Goſpel.* So far as you find God going on with your Work, go you on with his. How is it, that Jeſus Chriſt is, in *Ireland* only, as a *Lion ſtaining all his garments with the blood of his Enemies*, and none to hold him out as a *Lamb ſprinkled with his own blood* to his Friends? Is it the Sovereignty and Intereſt of *England* that is alone to be there tranſacted? For my part, I ſee no farther into the MYSTERY of theſe things, but that I could heartily rejoyce, That Innocent Blood being expiated, the *Iriſh* might enjoy *Ireland ſo long as the Moon endureth*, ſo that Jeſus Chriſt might poſſeſs the *Iriſh.* But God having ſuffered thoſe ſworn Vaſſals of the *man of ſin* to break out into ſuch ways of Villany, as render them obnoxious unto Vengeance, upon ſuch Rules of Government amongſt Men, as he hath appointed: Is there therefore nothing to be done, but to give a *Cup of Blood* into their Hands? Doubtleſs, the way whereby God will bring the *followers after the Beaſt* to condign Deſtruction, for all their Enmity to the Lord Jeſus, will be, by ſuffering them to run into ſuch Practices againſt Men, as ſhall righteouſly expoſe them to Vengeance, according to acknowledged Principles among the Sons of Men. But is this all? Hath he no further Aim? Is not all this, to make way for the Lord Jeſus to take poſſeſſion of his long-ſince promiſed Inheritance? And ſhall we ſtop at the firſt Part? Is this to deal fairly with the Lord Jeſus? call him out to the Battle, and then keep away his Crown? God hath been faithful, in doing Great Things for you; be ye faithful in this one, Do your utmoſt, for the Preaching of the Goſpel in *Ireland.*

Give

Give me leave to add a few Motives to this Duty.

1. *They want it.* No want like theirs who want the Goſpel. I would there were, for the preſent, one Goſpel Preacher for every Walled Town in the *Engliſh* Poſſeſſion in *IRELAND*. The Land mourneth, and *the People periſh for want of Knowledge: Many run to and fro*, but it is upon other Deſigns; *Knowledge is not increaſed.*

2. they are ſenſible of their *Wants*, and cry out for *Supply*. The Tears and Cries of the Inhabitants of *Dublin*, after the Manifeſtations of Chriſt, are ever in my view. If they were in the Dark, *and loved to have it ſo*, it might ſomething cloſe a Door upon the Bowels of our Compaſſion: But they cry out of their Darkneſs, and are ready to follow every one whoſoever, to have a Candle. If their being Goſpelleſs, move not our Hearts, it is hoped their importunate Cries will diſquiet our Reſt, and wreſt help, as a Beggar doth an Alms.

3. *Seducers* and *Blaſphemers* will not be wanting to *ſow their Tares*, which thoſe Fallowed Fields will receive, if there be none to caſt in the Seed of the Word. Some are come over thither already without Call, without Employments, to no other End, but only to vaunt themſelves to be God, as they have done in the open Streets with deteſtable Pride, Atheiſm, and Folly. So that, as *IRELAND* was heretofore termed by ſome in Civil things, *A Frippery of Bankrupts*, for the great number of Perſons of Broken Eſtates that went thither: So, doubtleſs, in Religion, it will prove a *Frippery of Monſtrous, Enormous, Contradictious Opinions*, if the Work of Preaching the Word of Truth and Soberneſs, be not carried on. And if this be the Iſſue of your preſent Undertakings, Will it be acceptable, think you, to the LORD JESUS,

That you have uſed his POWER and MIGHT, to make way for ſuch THINGS as his Soul abhors?

1. Will it be for his Honour, That the People whom he hath ſought to himſelf with ſo *high a hand*, ſhould, at the very entrance of his taking Poſſeſſion, be leavened with thoſe high and heavenly Notions, which have an open and experimented tendency to Earthly and Fleſhly Dunghill Practices? Or,

2. Will it be for the Credit and Honour of your Profeſſion of the GOSPEL, that ſuch a *breach ſhould be under your hand?* That it ſhould be (as it were) *by your Means?* Will it not be a *Sword, and an Arrow, and a Maul* in the Hands of your Obſervers? Who can bear the juſt Scandal that would accrue? Scandal to the Magiſtrates, Scandal to the Miniſters of this Generation, in neglecting ſuch an Opportunity of advancing the GOSPEL; ſleeping all the day, whilſt others *ſow Tares.*

3. Where will be the hoped, the expected Conſolation of this great Affair, when the Teſtimony and Pledge of the peculiar Preſence of CHRIST among us, upon ſuch an ISSUE, ſhall be wanting?

What then ſhall we do? This Thing is often ſpoken of, ſeldom driven to any cloſe!

1. Pray; pray the Lord of the Harveſt, That he would ſend out, That he *would thruſt forth Labourers into his Harveſt.* The Labourers are ready to ſay, *There is a Lyon in the way*; Difficulties to be contended withal: And to ſome Men it is hard ſeeing a *Call of GOD* through Difficulties: When, if it would but cloath itſelf with a few carnal Advantages, how apparent is it to them! They can ſee it through a little Cranny. Be earneſt then with the Maſter of theſe *Labourers*, in whoſe hand is *their life and breath, and all their ways*, That he would powerfully *Conſtrain* them to be willing to enter into the Fields, that are *white for the Harveſt.*

2. Make

2. Make ſuch Proviſion, that thoſe who will go, may be fenced from outward Straits and Fears, ſo far as the uncertainty of Humane Affairs in General, and the preſent tumultuating Perturbations will admit. And let not, I beſeech you, this be the buſineſs of an unpurſued Order. But,

3. Let ſome be appointed (Generals die and ſink by themſelves) to Conſider this thing, and to hear what ſober PROPOSALS may be made by any whoſe Hearts God ſhall ſtir up to ſo good a Work.

This, I ſay, is a Work wherein God expecteth Faithfulneſs from you: Stagger not at his Promiſes, nor your own Duty. However, by all Means poſſible in this Buſineſs, I have ſtriven to deliver my own Soul.

Once more; To this of Faith, let me ſtir you up to another Work of Love, and that in the behalf of many poor periſhing Creatures, that want all Things needful for the ſuſtentation of Life; poor Parentleſs Children, that lie Begging, Starving, Rotting in the Streets, and find no Relief; yea, Perſons of Quality, that have loſt their deareſt Relations in your Service, ſeeking for Bread, and finding none. Oh, that ſome Thoughts of this alſo, might be ſeriouſly committed to them that ſhall take care for the Goſpel.

Uſe 3.] I deſire now to make more particular Application of the Doctrine, as to things purely Spiritual: Until you know how to Believe for your own Souls, you will ſcarcely know how to Believe for a Nation. Let this then teach us, *To lay the burden and trouble of our Lives upon the right Shoulder.* In our *STAGGERINGS*, our Doubtings, our Diſputes, we are apt to aſſign this and that Reaſon of them; when the ſole Reaſon indeed is, our Unbelief. Were it not for ſuch a Cauſe, or ſuch a Cauſe, I could Believe; that is, were there no need of Faith; That is, Faith muſt

remove the *Mountains* that lie in the way, and then all will be plain. It is not the greatneſs of Sin, nor continuance in Sin, nor backſliding into Sin, that is the true Cauſe of thy Staggering, whatever thou pretendeſt: The removal of all theſe is from that Promiſe, whoſe Stability and Certainty, I before laid forth, but ſolely from thy Unbelief, That *root of bitterneſs, which ſprings up and troubles thee.* It is not the diſtance of the Earth from the Sun, nor the Sun's withdrawing itſelf, that makes a dark and gloomy Day, but the interpoſition of Clouds and vaporous Exhalations. Neither is thy Soul beyond the reach of the Promiſe; nor doth God withdraw himſelf; but the Vapours of thy carnal unbelieving Heart do cloud thee. It is ſaid of one Place, *Chriſt could do no great Work there:* Why ſo? For want of Power in him? Not at all, but meerly for want of Faith in them: it was *becauſe of their Unbelief.* The Promiſe can do no great Work upon thy Heart, to humble thee, to pardon, to quiet thee. Is it for want of Fulneſs and Truth therein? Not at all: But meerly for want of Faith in thee, that keeps it off. Men complain, That were it not for ſuch things and ſuch things, they could believe; when it is their Unbelief that caſts thoſe Rubs in the way. As if a Man ſhould caſt Nails and ſharp Stones in his own way, and ſay, Verily I could run, were it not for thoſe Nails and Stones, when he continues himſelf to caſt them there. You could Believe, were it not for theſe Doubts and Difficulties, theſe ſtaggering Perplexities, when alas! they are all from your Unbelief.

Uſe 4.] See the *ſinfulneſs of all thoſe ſtaggering Doubts and Perplexities, wherewith many poor Souls have almoſt all their Thoughts taken up:* Such as is the Root, ſuch is the Fruit. If the *Tree be evil, ſo will the Fruit be alſo. Men do not gather Grapes from Brambles.*

What

What is the Root that bears this Fruit of Staggering? Is it not the evil *Root of Unbelief?* And can any Good come from thence? Are not all the Streams of the ſame Nature with the Fountain? If that be bitter, can they be ſweet? If the Body be full of Poyſon, will not the Branches have their Venom alſo? Surely, if the Mother (Unbelief) be the Mouth of Hell, the Daughters (Staggerings) are not the Gates of Heaven.

Of the *Sin of Unbelief*, I ſhall not now ſpeak at large: It is in Sum, *The Univerſal Oppoſition of the Soul unto God:* All other Sins ariſe againſt ſomething or other of his revealed Will: Only *Unbelief* ſets up itſelf in a direct Contradiction to all of him that is known. Hence the weight of Condemnation in the Goſpel is conſtantly laid on this Sin. *He that believeth not, on him the wrath of God abideth: he ſhall be damned.* Now, as every drop of Sea-water retains the brackiſhneſs and ſaltneſs of the whole, ſo every ſtaggering Doubt that is an iſſue of this Unbebelief, hath in it the unſavourineſs and diſtaſtfulneſs unto God that is in the whole.

Further, to give you a little light into what acceptance our ſtaggering Thoughts find with the Lord, according to which, muſt be our Eſteem of all that is in us:

Obſerve, that
1. *They Grieve him.*
2. *They Provoke him.*
3. *They Diſhonour him.*

1. *Such a frame grieves the Lord.* Nothing more preſſes true Love, than to have any Appearance of Suſpicion. Chriſt comes to *Peter* and asks him, *Simon, Son of Jonas, loveſt thou me?* Joh. 21. 15. *Peter* ſeems glad of an opportunity to confeſs him, and his Love to him, whom not long ſince he had denied; and

and answers readily, *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* But when Christ comes with the same Question again and again, the Holy Ghost tells us, *Peter was grieved, because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?* It exceedingly troubled *Peter*, That his Love should come under so many Questionings, which he knew to be sincere. The Love of Christ to his, is infinitely beyond the Love of his to him. All our Doubtings are nothing but so many Questionings of his Love. We cry, *Lord Jesus, Lovest thou us?* and again, *Lord Jesus, Lovest thou us?* and that with distrustful Hearts and Thoughts, That it is not, it cannot be. Speaking of the *Unbelieving Jews*, the Holy Ghost tells us, *Jesus was grieved for the hardness of their hearts*, Mark 3. 5. And as it is bitter to him in the Root, so also in the Fruit. Our *Staggerings* and Debates, when we have a Word of Promise, is a Grief to his Holy Spirit, as the unkindest return we can make unto his Love.

2. *It provokes him. How can this be* (says *Zechariah*) *that I should have a son?* This shall be, (saith the Lord) and thou thy self, for thy questioning, shalt be a Sign of it, *Thou shalt be dumb, and not speak*, Luke 1. His Doubting was a Provocation: And our Saviour expresses no less in that bitter Reproof to his Disciples, upon their Wavering, *Matt.* 17. 17. *O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you?* that is, in this Unbelieving frame. Poor Souls are apt to admire the Patience of God in other Matters, That he spared them in such and such Sins, at such and such times of Danger; but his exceeding Patience towards them in their carnal Reasonings, and fleshly Objections against Believing, this they admire not; nay, generally they think it should be so: God would not have them one step farther. Nay, they could be more stedfast in

Belie-

Believing, as they ſuppoſe, might it ſtand with the good Will of God; when all this while, this frame, of all others, is the greateſt provocation to the Lord; He never exerciſes more Forbearance, than about this kind of Unbelief.

When the *Spies* had gone into *Canaan*, had ſeen the Land, and brought of the good Fruit of it, then to repine, then to queſtion whether God would bring them into it or no; this cauſed the Lord *to ſwear in his wrath, that they ſhould not enter into his reſt.* When God hath brought Men to the Borders of Heaven, diſcovered to them the Riches and Excellency of his Grace, admitted them to enter as Spies into the Kingdom of Glory, then to fall a ſtaggering whether he intends them an Entrance or no, is that which lies heavy on him. The like may be ſaid of all promiſed Mercies and Deliverances whatſoever.

That this is a *Provocation*, the Lord hath abundantly teſtified, inaſmuch as for it, he hath oftentimes ſnatched ſweet Morſels from the Mouths of Men, and turned aſide the ſtream of Mercies, when it was ready to flow in upon them. *If* (ſaith he) *you will not believe, you ſhall not be eſtabliſhed*, Iſa. 7. 9. The very Mercy but now promiſed concerning your Deliverance, ſhall be with-held. O! ſtop not Succeſs from *Ireland*, by Unbelief.

3. *It diſhonours God.* In the cloſe of this Verſe it is ſaid, *Abraham was ſtrong in Faith* (or, *ſtaggered not*) *giving glory to God.* To be eſtabliſhed in Believing, is to *give God the greateſt glory* poſſible. Every ſtaggering Thought that ariſeth from this Root of Unbelief, robs God of his Glory.

1. It robs him of the *Glory of his Truth. He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar, becauſe he believeth not his record*, 1 Joh. 5. 10. Let Men pretend what they pleaſe, (as moſt an end we give in ſpecious

ous Pretences for our Unbelief) the bottom of all is, The queſtioning of the Truth of God in our falſe Hearts.

2. It robs him of the *glory of his Fidelity or Faithfulneſs* in the diſcharge of his Promiſes: *If we confeſs our ſins, he is faithful to forgive us our ſins*, 1 Joh. 1. 9. He hath engaged his Faithfulneſs in this Buſineſs of the forgiveneſs of *Iniquities*: He, whoſe Right it is, calling that in queſtion, calls the faithfulneſs of God in queſtion.

3. It robs him of *the glory of his Grace*. In a word, If a Man ſhould chuſe to ſet himſelf in an univerſal Oppoſition unto God, he can think of no more compendious way than this. This then is the Fruit, this the Advantage of all our Staggering, we rob God of Glory, and our own Souls of Mercy.

Uſe 5.] Be aſhamed of, and humbled for all your ſtaggerings at the Promiſes of God, with all your fleſhly Reaſonings, and carnal Contrivances iſſuing therefrom. For the moſt part, we live upon Succeſſes, not Promiſes: unleſs we ſee and feel the print of Victories, we will not Believe. The Engagement of God is almoſt quite forgotten in our Affairs: We travel on without Chriſt, like his Mother, and ſuppoſe him only to be in the Croud: But we muſt return to ſeek him where we left him, or our journying on will be to no purpoſe.

When *Job*, after all his complaining, had ſeen *the End of the Lord*, he cries out, *Now I abhor my ſelf in duſt and aſhes*. You have ſeen *the End of the Lord* in many of his Promiſes: Oh, that it might prevail to make you abhor your ſelves in Duſt and Aſhes, for all your Carnal Fears and Corrupt Reaſonings, upon your Staggerings.

When

When *David* enjoyed his promiſed Mercy, he eſpecially ſhames himſelf for every thought of Unbelief that he had whilſt he waited for it: *I ſaid*, (ſaith he) *in my haſte, That all men were liars.* And now he is humbled for it. Is this to be thankful, to forget our provoking Thoughts of Unbelief, when the Mercy is enjoyed? The Lord ſet it home upon your Spirits, and give it to receive its due manifeſtation.

1. If there be any Counſels, Deſigns, Contrivances on foot amongſt us, that are bottomed on our Staggering at the Promiſe under which we are; Oh, let them be inſtantly caſt down to the Ground. Let not any be ſo fooliſh as to ſuppoſe that Unbelief will be a Foundation for quiet Habitations. You are careful to avoid all ways that might diſhonour you, as the Rulers of ſo great a Nation: Oh, be much more careful about ſuch things as will diſhonour you as Believers; That's your greateſt Title, That's your chiefeſt Privilege. Search your own Thoughts, and if any Contrivance, any Compliance he found ſpringing up, whoſe ſeed was ſown by ſtaggering at the Promiſe, root them up, and caſt them out, before it be too late.

2. Engage your Hearts againſt all ſuch Ways for the future: Say unto God, How Faithful art thou in all thy Ways! How able to perform all thy Promiſes! How haſt thou eſtabliſhed thy Word in Heaven and Earth! Who would not put their Truſt in thee? We deſire to be aſhamed, That ever we ſhould admit in our Hearts the leaſt ſtaggering at the ſtability of thy Word.

3. Act as Men bottomed upon *unſhaken things*, that are not at all moved by the greateſt appearing Oppoſitions: *He that believeth, will not make haſte.* Be not haſty in your Reſolves in any Diſtreſs: Wait for

for the accompliſhment of the *Viſion*, *for it will come*. So long as you are in the Way of God, and do the Work of God, let not ſo much as your Deſires be too haſty, after appearing Strengthnings and Aſſiſtance. Whence is it that there is amongſt us, ſuch bleating after the Compliance of this or that Party of the Sons of Men, perhaps priding themſelves in our Actings upon Unbelief; as though we proclaimed, that without ſuch and ſuch, we cannot be protected in the Things of God. Let us (I beſeech you) live above thoſe things that are unworthy of the Great Name that is called upon by us.

Oh, that by theſe, and the like Ways, we might manifeſt our Self-Condemnation, and Abhorrency, for all that Diſtruſt and Staggering at the Word of God, which ariſing from Unbelief, hath had ſuch deplorable Iſſues upon all our Counſels and Undertakings.

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